

Minutes of the Senate Agriculture, Forestry and Tourism Committee

Thursday, March 1st, 2007

9:00 a.m.

Room 110 Farnum Building

- Chairman Van Woerkom called the Committee to order at 9:05 a.m.
- Members Present: Van Woerkom, Gilbert, Birkholz and Whitmer
- Members Excused: Gleason
- Sen. Gilbert moved to approve the minutes for February 8th. His motion was supported by Sen. Birkholz and was approved unanimously.
- Chairman Van Woerkom invited Donna LaCourt and Cara Boucher from DNR to testify
- Ms. LaCourt explained her new role as state forester. She provided general overview of the DNR's structure and discussed the state of the timber industry in Michigan. She mentioned that the timber markets are in decline and therefore revenue to the forest development fund is also on the decline. However, the timber industry, along with the state, is seeking new markets in alternative energy and using chemicals that come from the wood.
- Chairman Van Woerkom asked her to comment on the certification of the state forest and also whether or not the state was meeting their requirements to harvest a set amount of acres.
- Ms. LaCourt noted that the state had undergone an audit for certification which it passed. Ms. Boucher stated they were trying to meet the harvest requirements but because of the number of no bid contracts not as much wood was being bought by the industry.
- Chairman Van Woerkom asked for an update on the private woodlot legislation that passed last session.

- Ms. Boucher explained that there was considerable interest in that program and that treasury was still putting together the forms and applications. She thought that landowners could be begin applying within the next month.
- Sen. Birkholz asked for an update regarding some of the mill closures.
- Ms. LaCourt responded that there had been four big closures and that they were working to reopen them with new products.
- Sen. Gilbert asked if the state forester position belonged within DNR.
- Ms. LaCourt replied that she felt comfortable within that department but wanted to continue working across department lines.
- Chairman Van Woerkom moved to excuse Sen. Gleason.
- Sen. Gilbert motioned to adjourn the meeting.
- With no more business before the committee Chairman Van Woerkom adjourned the meeting at 9:42 a.m.